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# EAST OREGONIAN

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WINNER OF THE 2013 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

One dollar

## PGG reports loss of \$7.9M

Co-op says restructuring should renew profitability

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
*East Oregonian*

It took deep cuts and considerable layoffs, but Pendleton Grain Growers expects to turn a profit next harvest after losing \$7.9 million in 2014 and overstating years of earnings prior to 2012.

General Manager Rick Jacobson offered a “state of the business” for PGG on Monday, describing how the board of directors restructured operations to shed underperforming divi-

sions and stop the financial bleeding.

Gone are each of six retail stores throughout Eastern Oregon, along with PGG-brand agronomy and 158 employees from the field to the back office. Such downsizing was painful but necessary to ensure the co-op remains viable into the future, Jacobson said.

PGG will instead shift focus back to its core areas of business, Jacobson said, which include grain, seed, energy, transportation and a new irrigation subsidiary named Precision Rain that opened Jan. 1 in Island City. The co-op

has also consolidated its debt through CoBank, with a \$15 million term loan and \$20 million line of credit.

With the changes, Jacobson said PGG is poised to move on from the cutbacks of a year ago.

“We’re probably in the best cash position than we’ve been in for a long time,” Jacobson said. “We have a wonderful relationship with our lender. I’m pleased with where we are. We’re positioned to move forward.”

Jacobson, a Pendleton native, was hired in 2012 to help lead PGG

See PGG/10A



EO file photo

PGG announced Monday it lost \$7.9 million in 2014 and has consolidated its debt with the U.S. Farm Credit System.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Gary Betts is the co-founder of 90.5 KBLU community radio station in Pendleton. Betts and his wife, Virginia Blakelock, created the station and decided to use wind and solar power to power it.

## INDIE AIRWAVES

Local radio stations broadcast for the community, by the community

By **ANTONIO SIERRA** • *East Oregonian*

Broadcast radio has long relied on weather as a source of content for local audiences.

KBLU also relies on the weather but in a different way. Without Mother Nature’s cooperation, the member-owned Pendleton radio station ceases to operate. The station’s radio tower, located south of Pilot Rock, is powered solely by solar and wind energy. Using solar panels and wind turbines, the radio tower usually gets enough juice to disseminate a 12-hour broadcast that covers Pendleton, Pilot Rock and some of the surrounding area.

See RADIO/2A



Photo courtesy of Gary Betts

KBLU cofounder Virginia Blakelock works on the radio station’s transmission shack south of Pilot Rock. The station’s studio is in downtown Pendleton.

### PENDLETON

## Funding source murky for \$64M in necessary utility upgrades

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**  
*East Oregonian*

Although the Pendleton City Council could approve several utility master plans requiring significant taxpayer investment Tuesday, the timeline for the fees and charges needed to fund those improvements is less certain.

Public Works Director Bob Patterson said he expects public discussion of utility rate increases and system development charges won’t take place for another six months to a year.

Patterson originally wanted to have rate and fee structures available to the public for consideration by July. But continued talk about the city’s other infrastructural problems, which include streets and city facilities, pushed back work on increasing

**“We have a big hole. How do we start digging out of it?”**

— **Bob Patterson**, Public Works Director

revenue for improvements to the city’s water, sewer and stormwater systems.

Rate hikes and instituting system development charges — fees assessed to new developments for their impact on the city’s utility system — were first publicly proposed by a hired consultant last February.

According to the consulting firm’s presentation, Pendleton would need to spend \$56.9 million over

See UTILITY/10A

### IRRIGON

## Dad charged with killing infant child

10-month-old died of head injuries, says Morrow Co. DA

By **PHIL WRIGHT**  
*East Oregonian*

The 21-year-old Irrigon man in jail for killing his 10-month-old daughter may have had a history of abusing the infant.

Travis Michael Martin faced an arraignment Monday via video from the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, where he has been since the Morrow County Sheriff’s Office arrested him Friday night following the death of Savannah Martin.

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson charged Martin with two counts first-degree manslaughter, two counts of second-degree manslaughter, three counts of first-degree criminal mistreatment, and two counts of second-degree assault.

The assault charges accuse Martin of injuring the baby in September 2014 and again in January. The mistreatment charges accuse Travis Martin of not providing care for his daughter relative to the assault and manslaughter charges.

Nelson explained he charged the young father with two counts each of manslaughter under different theories of the crime. One accuses Martin of killing the girl through neglect or mistreatment, and the other theory accuses him of “having previously engaged in a pattern or practice of assault of Savannah Martin ...”

Nelson also said a grand jury will review the case, and he will charge Martin based that indictment. He said that court action is likely to happen Friday.

Nelson alleged Martin sometime Wednesday night threw his 10-month-old daughter on the floor. The girl was awake but appeared to be sick the next morning, Nelson said, and later Thursday her mother, KaSandra Martin, took the child to Pendleton for errands. There she found Savannah was unresponsive in the back seat of their vehicle. Nelson said the mother then sought help.

St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, treated the baby before sending her in an air ambulance to Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center and Children’s Hospital, Spokane, where she died that afternoon. Nelson said medical examiners there conducted an autopsy.

Law enforcement interviewed the girl’s family members, Nelson said, and Morrow County sheriff’s investigators questioned Travis Martin on Friday and ruled the girl’s death a homicide. Nelson did not comment on why Martin threw the girl.

KaSandra Martin never abandoned her daughter in Pendleton, Nelson also said, and she does not face any charges. Investigators determined she had no knowledge of the incident. He said KaSandra Martin often worked nights and left the child in the care of her father.

KaSandra Martin did not respond to a message seeking comment. Her Facebook



Martin

